

# Plan of Action for **Drinking Water** in First Nations Communities

---

Progress Report – January 17, 2008



Indian and Northern  
Affairs Canada

Affaires indiennes  
et du Nord Canada

Canada

**Table of Contents**

<b>Executive Summary</b>	p. ii
<b>Background</b>	p.1
The Plan of Action for Drinking Water	p.1
<b>Progress on the Plan of Action</b>	p.3
Issuing a Clear Protocol on Water Standards	p.3
Ensuring Oversight of Water Systems by Certified Operators	p.4
Address All High-Risk System, Starting With 21 Priority Communities	p.5
Creating an Expert Panel to Provide Options for a Regulatory Regime	p.6
Report on Progress	p.7
<b>Other Progress on Water</b>	p.8
<b>Conclusion</b>	p.10
<b>Appendix A - 21 Priority Communities Progress Report</b>	p.11

## **Executive Summary**

The Government of Canada has made significant progress in helping First Nations in the provision of drinking water to First Nations on reserve. Since the release of “Plan of Action for Drinking Water in First Nations Communities – Progress Report – March 22, 2007” actions undertaken by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Health Canada, and Environment Canada, achieved the following results:

- In March 2006, 193 high-risk drinking water systems were identified; that number was reduced by March 2007 to 97; and this number has now been reduced to 85;
- In March 2007, 14 of the original 21 communities identified as priorities remained in that category; eight more of these have been removed from that category, notably Moose Deer Point (ON), Dene Tha' (AB), Frog Lake (AB), Canoe Lake (BC), Lake Babine (BC), Semiahmoo (BC), Toosey (BC), and Toquaht (BC);
- Work is now underway to hire an additional 30 to 40 circuit rider trainers, nearly doubling the present number of trainers; and
- In addition, there has been progress made in other areas. Through the work of the Circuit Rider Training Program, the number of operators who have achieved the first level of certification or greater has increased to 41%, representing 475 out of 1,152 water system operators and back-up operators across the country.

Health Canada, in collaboration with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and First Nations stakeholders, has developed the *Procedure for Addressing Drinking Water Advisories in First Nations Communities South of 60°*. The Procedure promotes a team approach to efficiently address a drinking water advisory where it has been issued in order to lift it in a timely manner. Implementation of the Procedure is underway.

Environment Canada has produced several technical guidance products and training materials on the topic of source water protection, which contain important information in regards to federal requirements for wastewater effluent quality and environmental protection. These materials will help First Nations take action on source water protection and sustainable water use. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada is reviewing the products and they will be incorporated into the *Protocol for Safe Drinking Water in First Nations Communities*.

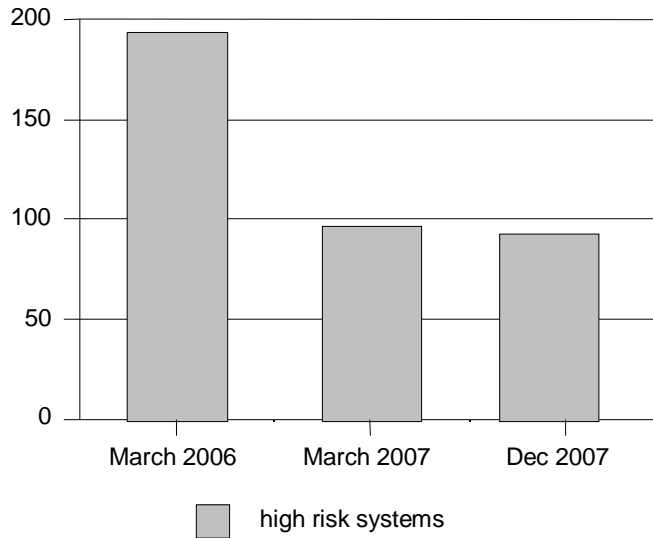
Together, these three departments have also produced, with the help of the Assembly of First Nations and other First Nations organizations, the *Water is a Treasure!* school kit. The activities in this kit will help increase awareness among First Nations children on the importance of clean and reliable drinking water, and encourage careers in the water sector. Since the March 2007 release of *Water is a Treasure!* more than 10,000 copies have been sent to Federal, Provincial and Band

operated schools nationwide, as well as Band Councils, Departments of Education, and various organizations.

In addition, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada is preparing a new national assessment of all water and wastewater systems. This assessment, which will take place throughout 2008 and 2009, will provide an independent review of the current status of all water and wastewater systems. It will also assess various options for community serviceability, looking into alternative ways for helping to ensure that safe drinking water is provided to the entire community instead of only those on communal systems. This assessment will identify the needs with respect to resources, training, and support for the provision of water for future years.

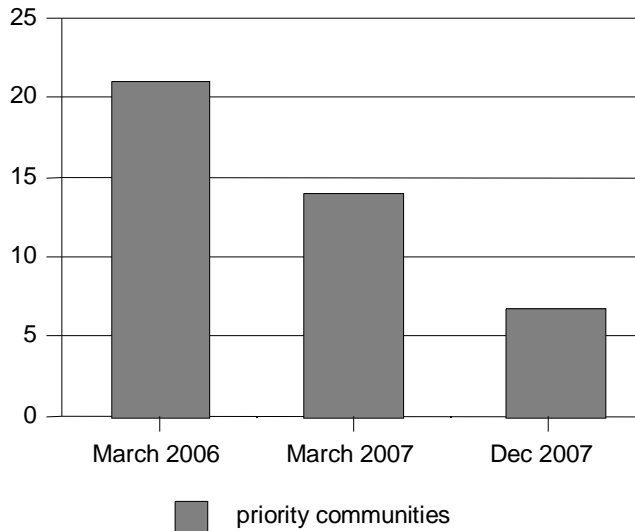
The Government of Canada is, and will continue to be, committed to helping First Nations in the provision of safe, clean, and reliable drinking water.

### **Progress on high risk systems in First Nation communities**



\*A high risk system is defined as a system that has major deficiencies in several aspects. Should a problem arise in one of those areas, the system is unlikely to be able to compensate, thus there is a high probability that any problem could result in unsafe water.

### **Progress on the 21 priority First Nation communities**



\*A priority community is defined as a community that had both a high-risk system and a drinking water advisory in place at the time of the Minister's March 2006 announcement.

## **Background**

The Government of Canada is committed to helping First Nations in the provision of safe, clean, and reliable drinking water. To achieve this goal, the Government of Canada provides funding and advice to First Nations to help them in the management and operation of their water systems.

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada provides funding assistance for the design, construction, operation and maintenance of water systems. It also provides funding for the training and certification of water system operators.

Health Canada works with First Nations to ensure that drinking water quality monitoring programs are in place in their communities. Environment Canada develops technical guidance and training material on source water protection and sustainable water use.

First Nations are responsible for the daily operations and management of their systems, which includes the design, construction, operation, maintenance, and monitoring of their water systems.

## **The Plan of Action for Drinking Water**

On March 21, 2006, Minister Prentice, the then Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, along with the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations Phil Fontaine, announced a Plan of Action for Drinking Water in First Nations communities. This action plan examined the multi-barrier approach of the First Nations Water Strategy, and placed added emphasis and action on expanding upon the key points that would have the most impact on reducing the risk ranking of water systems in First Nations communities. In addition, these activities would also address the recommendations made by the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development.

Specifically, in the Plan of Action, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada committed to the following activities:

- issuing a clear protocol on water standards;
- ensuring mandatory training and oversight of water systems by certified operators;
- addressing the drinking water concerns of all high risk system, starting with 21 priority communities;
- creating an expert panel that will provide options for a regulatory regime for drinking water on reserve; and
- committing to future reporting on the progress of the Plan of Action.

The department secured \$60 million over two years from Budget 2006 to help reach the objectives as set out in the Plan of Action.

This report will show the progress that has been made since the March 21, 2006 announcement through the Plan of Action with respect to helping First Nations in the provision of clean, safe drinking water to their communities.

## **Progress on the Plan of Action**

The Government of Canada has made significant progress in helping First Nations in the provision of drinking water to First Nations on reserve. The following activities have resulted in the number of high-risk water systems decreasing from 97 systems as of March 2007 to 85 systems. More First Nations on reserve now have access to safe drinking water.

Following are the details on the progress made with the five specific action items of the Plan of Action.

### **Issuing a Clear Protocol on Water Standards**

On the date of the announcement of the Plan of Action, the Honourable Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians also released the *Protocol for Safe Drinking Water in First Nations Communities* (available on-line at [www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/H2O](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/H2O)). Based on advice from First Nations practitioners and other stakeholders, a number of improvements are planned for the *Protocol*. Notable future additions will include Health Canada's *Procedures for Addressing Drinking Water Advisories*, and Environment Canada's guidance materials on source water protection plans.

Health Canada has led the development of the procedures for First Nations, Health Canada, and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada to follow when issuing and lifting drinking water advisories in order to speed up response time and shorten the duration of advisories. Addressing the underlying causes of a drinking water advisory is a key priority of the Government of Canada, as they are for First Nations communities.

Environment Canada has been developing technical manuals on source water assessment and community-level water use audits. Many of their manuals have been pilot- tested in First Nations communities.

Therefore, in summary, with respect to progress on the protocol:

- Improvements are being made to the protocol, including the addition of Health Canada's *Procedures for Addressing Drinking Water Advisories*, and Environment Canada's guidance materials on source water protection plans.



## Ensuring Oversight of Water Systems by Certified Operators

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada provides funding to First Nations and First Nations technical organizations to support the Circuit Rider Training Program, which is the main vehicle by which most First Nations operators receive the required training to operate their systems. This program provides qualified experts who rotate through a circuit of communities, providing hands-on training for the operators on their own system. Circuit rider trainers also help the First Nations with minor troubles and issues of operation and maintenance of their systems.

Through the work of the Circuit Rider Training Program, the number of water treatment system operators who have achieved the first level of certification or greater has increased to 41% of all water operators as of Fall 2007. This represents 475 out of 1,152 water system operators and back-up operators across the country.

Since the announcement of the Plan of Action, work has been underway to strengthen the Circuit Rider Training Program, including the establishment of a network between the circuit rider trainers, the sharing of best practices, and plans to hire additional trainers to ensure an optimum number of communities per trainer. It is anticipated that an additional 30 to 40 trainers will be hired over the next two years.

The main challenge for the Circuit Rider Training Program created by the Plan of Action is to ensure oversight of water systems by certified operators (i.e., by service providers who are qualified in a manner consistent with the applicable standards). In many cases, the circuit rider trainers provide sufficient oversight and technical support through 24-hour hotlines. However, when the attention by the circuit rider trainer is deemed insufficient for the training and support of the operator or for the timely provision of safe drinking water, a third party provider may be contracted out to provide additional oversight, supervision, and mentoring to the First Nation. This third party contracting is managed through the Safe Water Operations Program. Both the Circuit Rider Training Program and the Safe Water Operations Program are being carefully coordinated to ensure the maximum benefit and oversight coverage for First Nations.

As such, the combination of both the improved Circuit Rider Training Program, as well as the possible use of the Safe Water Operations Program, will help address risk ranking issues related to the operation of the system, to the training of the operator, and to monitoring and record keeping, and is thus likely to have the most significant impact on lowering the risk-ranking of the system.

Therefore, in summary, with respect to progress on oversight:

- a 24-hour hotline and emergency support is available to all First Nations as of December 2006;
- the expansion of Circuit Rider Training Program is underway, and includes plans for hiring additional trainers;

#### Address All High-Risk System, Starting With 21 Priority Communities

As indicated previously, the main, but not the only, objective of the Plan of Action is to address all systems identified as high-risk, thereby helping to ensure safe drinking water in First Nations communities. Reducing the risk level of a water system can be accomplished by addressing the deficiencies at any of the barriers, notably at the source water, the design of the system, the operation of the system, the training of the operator, and the monitoring and record keeping related to the system.

As of March 2007, there were 97 identified high-risk systems remaining. From these, 14 were also identified as being among the priority communities announced by the Minister. Today, there remains only 85 high-risk systems. In addition, eight additional priority communities have been addressed by either having their drinking water advisories lifted and/or the risk level of their water systems reduced, notably Moose Deer Point (ON), Dene Tha' (AB), Frog Lake (AB), Canoe Lake (BC), Lake Babine (BC), Semiahmoo (BC), Toosey (BC), and Toquaht (BC). We are continuing to work with the remaining six priority communities to address the remaining issues. Of these, two have had the issues addressed and are waiting for testing results to confirm they can be removed from the Priority Communities list. The other four require the design and construction of a new system and therefore are a long-term issue. The detailed progress for each of the 21 priority communities can be found in Appendix A.

As previously mentioned, the 21 priority communities were only the first to have remedial plans implemented out of all of the communities with either high-risk systems or drinking water advisories. In March 2006, there were an additional 149 First Nations communities beyond the 21 priority communities that also had one or more high-risk community drinking water systems. There were also another 54 communities that had one or more drinking water advisories. In all, this meant that there were a total of 224 First Nations communities that had water issues that needed to be addressed.

Work has progressed very well for many of these communities. As of December 2007, 116 First Nations communities have water issues that need to be addressed. Out of these, 56 communities have one or more high-risk community drinking water systems, 40 communities have one or more drinking water advisories, and 20 communities have both one or more high-risk systems and

one or more drinking water advisories. Remedial plans have been developed for each of these communities, and currently vary in implementation from design phase to nearly completed.

Therefore, in summary, with respect to progress on risk-levels and priority communities:

- there are currently 85 high-risk community drinking water systems; this is down from the 97 high-risk systems as of the March 2007 progress report;
- eight priority communities have been addressed by either having their drinking water advisories lifted and/or the risk level of their water systems reduced, notably Moose Deer Point (ON), Dene Tha' (AB), Frog Lake (AB), Canoe Lake (BC), Lake Babine (BC), Semiahmoo (BC), Toosey (BC), and Toquaht (BC), therefore only six of the original 21 remain; and,
- there are 116 communities that still have high-risk community drinking water systems and/or drinking water advisories to be addressed; this is down from the 224 communities (which included the 21 priority communities) at the time of the announcement.

#### Creating an Expert Panel to Provide Options for a Regulatory Regime

An Expert Panel was created and held public hearings across Canada from June to August, 2006. Hearings were held in Whitehorse, Edmonton, Vancouver, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Toronto, Québec City, Halifax and Thunder Bay. The panel submitted its final report to the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada on November 15, 2006. The final report was tabled in the House of Commons on December 7, 2006. The report and various potential regulatory options proposed by the Expert Panel have since been extensively analysed by the Minister and senior officials of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Health Canada and Environment Canada.

In June 2007, the Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples also released a report called: *Safe Drinking Water for First Nations*, in which it recommended that the Government of Canada conduct a professional audit of water system facilities and an independent needs assessment in relation the delivery of safe drinking water on reserve. The Senate also recommended that INAC undertake a comprehensive consultation process with First Nations communities regarding legislative options, with a view to collaboratively developing such legislation with First Nations.

The Minister is giving careful consideration to the options proposed by the Expert Panel and to the recommendations put forward by the Senate before he proceeds to next steps with respect to the development of a regulatory framework for safe drinking water on First Nation reserves.

Therefore, in summary, with respect to progress on a regulatory framework for safe drinking water in First Nations communities:

- In December 2006, the Report of the Expert Panel was tabled in Parliament;
- In June 2007 the Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples released *Safe Drinking Water for First Nations*; and,
- The Minister is considering the options proposed by the Expert Panel as well as the Senate's recommendations before he proceeds to next steps with respect to the development of a regulatory framework for safe drinking water on First Nation reserves.

### Report on Progress

The first progress report was tabled to Parliament on December 7, 2006. A second progress report was tabled to Parliament on March 20, 2007. This document is the third report on the Plan of Action for Drinking Water in First Nations Communities. Further reports will continue to highlight progress.

This report can be found on the department's water web site at [www.aic-inac.gc.ca/H2O](http://www.aic-inac.gc.ca/H2O).

### **Other Progress on Water**

Because drinking water advisories are an important preventative measure to protect public health, research conducted by Health Canada determined that the communication of drinking water advisories in First Nations communities must be improved. Based on this research, Health Canada, in collaboration with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and First Nations stakeholders, has developed the *Procedure for Addressing Drinking Water Advisories in First Nations Communities South of 60°*. The Procedure was developed to provide guidance to Chiefs and Councils and other involved stakeholders on how to efficiently address the underlying cause(s) of a drinking water advisory after it has been issued. The main objective of the Procedure is to promote a team approach to help Chiefs and Councils coordinate efforts between all relevant stakeholders to ensure that an advisory is lifted as quickly as possible. Roles and responsibilities of Health Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and First Nations, as well as basic steps to be undertaken once an advisory is issued in First Nations communities are outlined in the Procedure. Communication and implementation of the Procedure to First Nations communities is underway.

Environment Canada has been providing information on federal requirements related to wastewater effluent quality and environmental protection. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada has been working closely with the department, following the work on the proposed Canada-wide Municipal Wastewater Effluent regulations, and has been drafting a *Protocol for Wastewater Treatment and Disposal in First Nations Communities* that will be harmonized with the regulations. Additionally, Environment Canada has produced several technical guidance products and training materials which will help First Nations take action on source water protection and sustainable water use. These products are currently being reviewed and will eventually be incorporated into the *Protocol for Safe Drinking Water in First Nations Communities*.

Together, these three departments have also produced, with the help of the Assembly of First Nations and other First Nations organizations, the *Water is a Treasure* school kit. The activities in this kit will help increase awareness among First Nations children on the importance of clean and reliable drinking water, and encourage careers in the water sector. *Water is a Treasure* has been provided to Band, federal, or provincial operated schools nationwide, as well as Band Councils, Departments of Education, and various First Nation organizations.

In addition, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada is preparing a new national assessment of all water and wastewater systems. This assessment, which will take place throughout 2008 and 2009, will provide an independent review of the current status of all water and wastewater systems. It will also assess various options for community serviceability, looking into alternative ways for helping to ensure that safe drinking water is provided to the entire community instead of only those on communal systems. This assessment will identify the needs with respect to resources, training, and support for the provision of water for future years.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the Government of Canada has developed a plan, and is moving forward on that plan with measurable results:

- The *Protocol for Safe Drinking water in First Nations Communities* is being strengthened and improved;
- More communities now have oversight of water systems by certified operators;
- There has been a significant decrease in the number of First Nations communities with high-risk communal water systems and/or drinking water advisories; and
- Options and recommendations for the development of a regulatory regime are being reviewed by the Minister before he proceeds to the next steps.

The Government of Canada is, and will continue to be, committed to helping First Nations in the provision of safe, clean, and reliable drinking water.

## Appendix A

# 21 Priority Communities Progress Report

### Atlantic

#### Pabineau

Pabineau, with a registered population of 227 people, 87 on reserve, is situated about 10 kilometres from Bathurst, New Brunswick. Its water problems date back to June 1, 2005 when a drinking water advisory was put in place because of equipment malfunction, which resulted in inadequate chlorination. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada evaluated the system in 2006 and determined that it was poorly designed.

*Progress to date:* On September 14, 2006, an agreement was reached between the Chief and Council and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada to install temporary individual treatment systems for each home and work towards the final solution of connecting to the municipal system of the town of Bathurst. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada met with the First Nation on June 12, 2007 to discuss progress to date and next steps. It was agreed that all homes on reserve not meeting Canadian Drinking Water Guidelines would have individual treatment systems installed, both the homes on private wells and the community system, and the pumphouse would be upgraded. The project is now complete. Water sampling is being carried out by Health Canada. Health Canada will review testing results and determine if the drinking water advisory should be lifted.

#### Woodstock

Woodstock, with a registered population of 813 people, 260 on reserve, is situated about five kilometres south of Woodstock, New Brunswick. Its water problems date back to March 1, 2005 when a drinking water advisory was put in place because of inadequate chlorination resulting in unacceptable microbiological levels.

*Progress to date:* Woodstock has been removed from the Priority Community category. The risk level for this community has been reduced from high to medium due to the work that has been done over the course of the year. Houses in the community are not under a drinking water advisory. Since the installation of pre-filters and disinfection systems, there is no longer a drinking water advisory on the Woodstock Health Centre and canteen. However, the line is still on a drinking water advisory. In addition, the operator has achieved certification to the level of the plant.



## **Quebec**

### **Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg**

Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, with a registered population of 2,671 people, 1,489 on reserve, is situated about 130 kilometres north of Gatineau/Ottawa, adjacent to the town of Maniwaki. Its water problems date back to 1999. There are two separate issues relating to water:

Some residents are connected to the community distribution system of Maniwaki through a municipal service agreement. The municipal system draws water from surface water, and has had issues with treating water to acceptable drinking water standards.

The remaining residents are on individual wells and have been on a drinking water advisory since 1999 because of an unacceptable level of uranium in the groundwater. This year Indian and Northern Affairs Canada evaluated technical solutions for treatment directly at the wells but found that current technologies are not viable because they cause unacceptable levels of radon gas.

*Progress to date:* The Municipality of Maniwaki started recent upgrades on its water system Aug. 30, 2006, to address treatment issues. Over the next five years Kitigan Zibi, in collaboration with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, will expand the distribution system to connect as many residents and community buildings as possible, currently on individual wells, to the municipal system. It is expected that in the meantime, the drinking water advisory will remain in place for these homes and they will be provided with bottled water for drinking. Various meetings and discussions have been held between Kitigan Zibi and Indian Northern Affairs Canada to establish a global action plan, which will cover not only the units that will be connected to the municipal system but also those that will remain on individual systems.

## **Ontario**

### **Shoal Lake #40**

Shoal Lake #40, with a registered population of 526 people, 254 on reserve, is situated near Kejick. Its water problems date back to Dec. 6, 2000 when a drinking water advisory was put in place because of equipment malfunction resulting in inadequate chlorination. This year, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada evaluated the existing facilities and found that there have been problems with consistent operations dating back to 2000. Work started on May 5, 2003, when a project was initiated to construct a new water treatment plant, which will meet current regulations.

*Progress to date:* A consultant has been selected to re-design the new water treatment plant. The design is scheduled to be complete in February 2008 with construction beginning in the spring of 2008. Certified oversight, which would result in a lower risk ranking for the community, has been offered to the First Nation. However, the First Nation has not responded. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada also held a workshop concerning certified oversight for all First Nations in the Bimose Tribal Council, which includes Shoal Lake #40, and representatives of the First Nation did not attend.

### Constance Lake

Constance Lake, with a registered population of 1,449 people, 711 on reserve, is situated about 40 kilometres northwest of Hearst. Its water problems date back to Nov. 18, 2005 when a drinking water advisory was put in place because of equipment malfunction. This year, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada evaluated the plant and found the necessary operation and maintenance work was not being done.

*Progress to date:* Constance Lake has been removed from the Priority Community category. The risk level for this community has been reduced from high to medium due to the work that has been done over the course of the year. The drinking water advisory was lifted July 2006. Work began in May 2006 when a contract with the Ontario Clean Water Agency was signed to provide certified oversight. A water treatability study is underway to identify the long-term solution, as the present plant does not meet current standards. The study should be completed by May 2008.

### Moose Deer Point

Moose Deer Point, with a registered population of 449 people, 143 on reserve, is situated on the O'Donnell Point peninsula in Georgian Bay north of Muskoka. Its water problems date back to 1998 when a drinking water advisory was put in place because of significant deterioration in the source water quality as well as inadequate chlorination. This year, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada evaluated the system and found that the necessary operation and maintenance work was not being done, and the pump houses were substandard.

*Progress to date:* Moose Deer Point has been removed from the Priority Community category. Effective December 19, 2007, the drinking water advisory has been lifted. Interim upgrades are complete, pending receipt of the completion certificate. The First Nation has also applied for Ontario Region's Safe Water Operations Program for funding for the oversight assistance. In the interim, the First Nation has hired a certified water treatment plant operator to operate the systems and provide training to the two operators in training. The design for the new system is now complete and the effective project approval submission has been approved. Construction is expected to be completed by 2010.

### Northwest Angle No. 37

Northwest Angle No. 37, with a registered population of 336 people, 153 on reserve, is situated southeast of Kenora. Its water problems date back to 2002 when a drinking water advisory was put in place because of inadequate chlorination. This year, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada evaluated the system and found that the chlorinator was malfunctioning, and there were problems with operation and maintenance work.

*Progress to date:* A drinking water advisory is still in place. A service provider has been selected to provide certified oversight for the water treatment plant operation. A contract is currently being finalized and, when in place, should result in a lower risk ranking for the community.

### Ochiichagwe'babigo-ining

Ochiichagwe'babigo-ining, with a registered population of 329 people, 109 on reserve, is situated north of Kenora. Its water problems date back to 2004 when a drinking water advisory was put in place because of equipment malfunction. This year, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada evaluated the system and found that the necessary operation and maintenance work was not being done. Work started in 2002 and continues to the present date.

*Progress to date:* Ochiichagwe'babigo-ining has been removed from the Priority Community category. The risk level for this community has been reduced from high to low due to the work that has been done over the course of the year. A new water treatment plant was opened in November 2006. Certified oversight is now in place, and the drinking water advisory has been lifted.

### Kingfisher

Kingfisher, with a registered population of 461 people, 429 on reserve, is situated about 500 kilometres north of Thunder Bay. Its water problems date back to 2004 when a drinking water advisory was put in place because of equipment malfunction resulting in inadequate chlorination. The water system has been evaluated and it was found that the necessary operation and maintenance work was not being done.

*Progress to date:* Work started on Aug. 9, 2005 and continues with an upgrade to the water treatment plant. The tender for the work closed on December 19th and the contract has been awarded. Mobilization is scheduled for March 2008 and construction is slated for the summer and fall of 2008. The First Nation's Tribal Council is preparing a proposal to deliver certified oversight for their First Nations. It is expected that certified oversight will result in a lower risk ranking and the removal of the drinking water advisory.

### Muskrat Dam Lake

Muskrat Dam Lake, with a registered population of 367 people, 213 on reserve, is situated in the Sioux Lookout District on the western shore of the Severn River. Its water problems date back to 2003 when a drinking water advisory was put in place because of inadequate chlorination and a high turbidity.

*Progress to date:* Indian and Northern Affairs Canada has worked closely with the First Nation to complete the construction of a piped sewer and water system that resulted in all of the community being connected to a piped system. A recent inspection of the sewage system revealed several maintenance deficiencies. A diesel station upgrade project is also underway to ensure the provision of a safe and reliable electrical supply. The First Nation's Technical Advisor at the Independent First Nations Alliance is developing a terms of reference to undertake a Water Treatability Study. The Department is presently reviewing options to identify funds to support this study. Recent Health Canada test results indicate the water treatment plant is capable of producing good treated water within guidelines but presently lacks adequate chlorine. It is expected that certified oversight would result in a lower risk ranking and the removal of the drinking water advisory. As such, the Department has been, and continues to be, in discussions with the First Nation on implementing certified oversight. To date the First Nation is still contemplating enrolment in the Safe Water Operations Program.

### Wabigoon Lake Ojibway

Wabigoon Lake Ojibway, with a registered population of 530 people, 153 on reserve, is situated east of Dryden. Its water problems date back to September 2005 when a drinking water advisory was put in place because of equipment malfunction resulting in inadequate chlorination as well as high turbidity. This year, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada evaluated the system and found that the necessary operation and maintenance work was not being done.

*Progress to date:* Wabigoon Lake Ojibway has been removed from the Priority Community category. The drinking water advisory has been lifted. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada has offered to provide funding for certified oversight of water operations. The First Nation has selected a service provider to provide certified oversight. A contract is currently being negotiated and, when in place, should result in a lower risk ranking.

## **Alberta**

### **Dene Tha'**

Dene Tha', with a registered population of 2,493 people, 1,799 on reserve, is situated 812 kilometres northwest of Edmonton. Its water problems date back to 2005 when drinking Water Advisories were put in place at two sites, Chateh, and Bushe River, because of unacceptable turbidity or particle counts. This year, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada evaluated the system and found that upgrades were required to the plant and operators needed training and certification. Long-term upgrades to the plant are currently being reviewed.

*Progress to date:* Dene Tha' has been removed from the Priority Community category. There is no longer any drinking Water Advisories in place for this community. The advisory on the Bushe River Reserves was lifted with the replacement of the cisterns and acceptable test results. Additionally, the March 2007 advisory in Chateh was lifted in June 2007. A feasibility/assessment was completed on the plant and reviews are now being undertaken to determine the long-term requirements. A study to determine the best source of raw water (ground water or river water) at Meander River is also underway. The commencement date for the upgrade of the water treatment system is yet to be decided. Operators continue to participate in the Circuit Rider Training Program and good records are being kept.

### **Driftpile**

Driftpile, with a registered population of 2,232 people, 778 on reserve, is situated about 300 kilometres northwest of Edmonton. Its current water problems date back to May 2005 when a drinking water advisory was put in place because to unacceptable turbidity levels in the water distribution system.

*Progress to date:* Driftpile has been removed from the Priority Community category. The risk level for this community has been reduced from high to medium due to the work that has been done over the course of the year. A new water treatment plant was opened Oct. 11, 2006 and the drinking water advisory immediately lifted. Since the new plant was commissioned, there have recently been problems with erosion of the berm. INAC has since provided funding for repairs and it is anticipated that there will be no further problems. Currently the First Nation is looking to partner with two other First Nations to recruit an oversight operator until it has a fully certified operator.

### **Frog Lake**

Frog Lake, with a registered population of 2,409 people, 1,415 on reserve, is situated about 245 kilometres east of Edmonton. Its water problems date back to July 2005 when a drinking water advisory was put in place because of equipment malfunction resulting in inadequate chlorination. In the fiscal year 2005/06, Indian

and Northern Affairs Canada evaluated the system and found that plant repairs were required and there were problems with the operation and maintenance work. Funding was provided to the First Nation in 2006 to undertake the necessary repairs and upgrade.

*Progress to date:* Frog Lake has been removed from the Priority Community category. The risk level for this community has been reduced from high to medium due to the work that has been done over the course of the year. Operators are actively participating in the Circuit Rider Program and record keeping is improving. On August 3, 2007, a new drinking water advisory was issued for the Health Canada facility, served by the community water system, due to low chlorine levels. The Nation is working with a consultant to put a secondary chlorination system in place to provide residual protection to this part of the community. This is not yet on line; it has been confirmed that the chlorine levels for the system remain within guidelines. There is also a Drinking water advisory for the Health Canada facility (Head Start program) where the cistern must be cleaned and disinfected. This facility is not served by the community water system. Two consecutive bacteriological water samples must be satisfactory prior to the advisory being lifted.

## **British Columbia**

### **Semiahmoo**

Semiahmoo, with a registered population of 77 people, 48 on reserve, is situated about 15 kilometres south of Surrey. Its water problems date back to October 2005 when the Drinking water advisory was put in place because of unacceptable microbiological quality. This year, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada evaluated the situation and found that a chlorination system was needed. Officials also found that the First Nation had permitted some businesses and homes had been connected without a permit or being inspected, creating a potential source of cross contamination.

*Progress to date:* Semiahmoo has been removed from the Priority Community category. The risk level for this community has been reduced from high to medium due to the work that has been done over the course of the year. Construction of the chlorination station is complete. A service contract is in place to provide certified oversight. It is expected that the drinking water advisory will stay in place until the issue of unauthorized connections is resolved.

### **Shuswap**

Shuswap, with a registered population of 230 people, 72 on reserve, is situated near Invermere. Its water problems date back to 2001 when the drinking water advisory was put in place because of inadequate disinfection or disinfectant

residual and unacceptable microbiological quality. This year, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada evaluated the system and found that the operator was uncertified and the wells had been disconnected. This meant the First Nation drew water from another water source, which was untreated.

*Progress to date:* Shuswap has been removed from the Priority Community category. The risk level for this community has been reduced from high to medium due to the work that has been done over the course of the year. The wells have been reconnected and the operator has been trained and certified. As a result, on Nov. 9, 2006, the drinking water advisory was lifted, and the risk ranking was reduced.

### Toquaht

Toquaht, with a registered population of 118 people, 10 on reserve, is situated near Ucluet. Its water problems date back to 2002 when the drinking water advisory was put in place because of inadequate disinfection or disinfectant residual, unacceptable microbiological quality and operational issues. This year, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada evaluated the operation and found problems with the operation and maintenance work, no chlorination and that a new water source was required.

*Progress to date:* Toquaht has been removed from the Priority Community category. The risk level for this community has been reduced from high to medium due to the certification of the operator. Groundwater exploration done last year identified a new water source; treatment options and the quantity of water were to be verified. The design and construction is expected to be completed by March 2009.

### Canoe Creek

Canoe Creek, with a registered population of 662 people, 120 on reserve, is situated southwest of Williams Lake on the east shore of the Fraser River. Its water problems date back to 1999 when the drinking water advisory was put in place because of inadequate disinfection or disinfectant residual, unacceptable microbiological quality and operational issues. This year, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada evaluated the operation of the system and found that there was no disinfection and problems with the operation and maintenance work.

*Progress to date:* Canoe Creek has been removed from the Priority Community category. The risk level for this community has been reduced from high to medium due to the work that has been done over the course of the year. A plant upgrade is underway which will address the issue of disinfection. The system design was completed July 2007, and funding was approved August 2007. It is expected the drinking water advisory will be lifted in April 2008 when the upgrades are complete.

### Lake Babine Nation - Community of Fort Babine

Fort Babine, is one of three Lake Babine Nation communities with a total registered population of 2,200 people with 250 on the reserve, situated 100 kilometres north of Smithers. Its water problems date back to 1999 when the drinking water advisory was put in place because of inadequate disinfection or disinfectant residual, unacceptable microbiological quality and operational issues. This year, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada evaluated the plant and found that the necessary repair work had not been completed.

*Progress to date:* Lake Babine has been removed from the Priority Community category. The risk level for this community has been reduced from high to medium due to operational improvements. The water treatment plant has been operational for over year with no water quality problems. Formal plant commissioning is still outstanding. The current operator has achieved level one certification.

### Toosey

Toosey, with a registered population of 276 people, 141 on reserve, is situated about 200 kilometres south of Prince George. Its water problems date back to 2004 when the drinking water advisory was put in place because of unacceptable microbiological quality and operational issues. This year, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada evaluated the operation of the system and found that the necessary operation and maintenance work was not being done.

*Progress to date:* Toosey has been removed from the Priority Community category. The risk level for this community has been reduced from high to medium due to the certification of the operator. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada met with Band officials in April 2007 to review completed remedial measures and to discuss the future plan of action to complete improvements. A revised feasibility submission to complete long term upgrades was approved July 2007. All improvements are scheduled to be completed by March 2009.

## **Yukon Office**

### Taku River Tlingit

Taku River Tlingit, with a registered population of 372 people, 83 on reserve, is situated in northern British Columbia. The community has two water systems, one adjacent to the town of Atlin, and the other is a bulk water fill system. Its water problems date back to January 2006 when a drinking water advisory was put in place because of an increase in turbidity. This year, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada evaluated the turbidity level and found that the increase was caused by work being done to replace a circulating pump in the system.



Corroded galvanized piping in the water treatment plant was also discovered when this work was being done.

*Progress to date:* Taku River Tlingit has been removed from the Priority Community category. There is no longer a drinking water advisory in place for this community. The construction phase for both drinking water treatment plant upgrades began September 2007. The treatment plant commissioning is targeted for July 2008. This will complete the required upgrades to bring the community's drinking water systems up to current Canadian standards.